

Watershed, Riparian and Fish Habitat

Key Message:

Clean, clear, and productive waters are a big reason that people come to the Superior National Forest to fish, swim, boat, camp, and view scenery. But these waters also provide important ecological functions that contribute to biodiversity and fish and wildlife habitat. Maintaining and improving watershed health, healthy riparian areas and a productive fishery are vitally important in managing the National Forest. The watershed and riparian emphasis of the Revised Plan contributed in large part to the Regional Forester's decision to select Modified Alternative E as the revised Forest Plan.

The Plan:

- *Goes beyond mitigation and best management practices to proactively manage watersheds and riparian areas for their inherent values.*
- *Includes objectives to protect, improve and restore watershed and riparian areas.*
- *Maintains the overall integrity of aquatic ecosystems, providing habitat for all species while supporting sustainable populations of game fish.*
- *Recognizes the important roles, authorities and cooperative relationships that exist among the National Forests, American Indian tribes and the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources regarding fish habitat management.*
- *Favors long-lived tree species and managing for longer rotations within riparian zones.*
- *Allows vegetation management in the near bank riparian area for the primary purpose of enhancing riparian values. Vegetation management can occur, but the primary purpose would be for enhancing or restoring riparian values, not for producing timber. The outer zone is suitable for timber management, but management would generally be for longer lived species and longer rotations.*
- *Gives special attention to the St. Louis River, allocating its headwaters as a Riparian Emphasis MA, which focuses on actively restoring, protecting and enhancing riparian ecological functions. The headwaters and main stems of most other major river systems on the Superior NF are either located within the BWCAW or are within areas allocated to eligible Wild, Scenic and Recreational River MAs, and thus are already protected.*